

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

June 24, 2014

Carolyn W. Colvin
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Ms Colvin,

Thank you for ensuring that those eligible for Social Security benefits are able to receive them in a timely and efficient manner. As you know, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is required to provide those with limited English proficiency (LEP) access to translation services, both over the phone and with in-person translation when necessary.

It has recently been brought to my attention that SSA instituted new contracts for the provision of these translation services. This new contract resulted in small- and minority-owned businesses in New Jersey losing their contract with SSA, allegedly without being informed by SSA that the contract was being rebid or provided an opportunity to submit a bid to continue providing these services. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security has issued directives to ensure the suitability of entities with access to SSA's database of personally identifiable information (PII). SSA has conducted a number of "suitability investigations" of contractors to determine if they meet the necessary standards.

In order to ensure full transparency and equity in the SSA contracting process, please provide answers to the following questions:

- When were previously contracted translation companies informed that the contract was subject to a rebid?
- What steps were taken to ensure that these contractors were given the time and technical assistance necessary to submit a new bid to continue their contract?

- Has the SSA provided information to its contracted translation service providers about the criteria required of them by the Department of Homeland Security directives?
- Did SSA conduct suitability investigations of all contractors? If not, what were the criteria used to determine which contractors were subjected to the suitability investigations and were those contractors not selected provided with any information about the investigations of the other contracts or why they weren't selected for investigation?
- What steps were taken to ensure that LEP individuals in New Jersey have timely access to in-person translation services by an out-of-state contractor?

Again, thank you for your hard work and dedication to providing LEP Social Security beneficiaries with highest-quality translation services they need and deserve. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator